

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified patent application in view of the present amendment and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

This amendment amends claim 8, cancels claims 1-7 and 9-12, and adds new claims 13-18.

Claim 8 stands rejected as being obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Fukuda, JP 2000-16228, in view of Yoshida, 6,786,505. Claim 8 patentably defines over a combination of Fukuda and Yoshida.

The M.P.E.P. sets forth the criteria for a rejection for obviousness as follows:

To establish a prima facie case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art and not based on applicant's disclosure.

See, MPEP § 706.02(j) citing In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

Neither Fukuda nor Yoshida teaches or suggests a portion of the steering wheel that blocks inflation fluid from venting through a vent opening when an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is in an inflated position. Fukuda teaches vent holes 38a and 38b that open when the pressure of the gas in the air bag reaches a fixed value. (Fukuda, Abstract).

There appears to be no teaching or suggestion in Fukuda of a portion of the steering wheel blocking inflation fluid from venting through a vent opening when the air bag is in an inflated position. Yoshida also fails to teach or suggest a portion of the steering wheel that blocks inflation fluid from venting through a vent opening when the air bag is in an inflated position. Since neither Fukuda nor Yoshida teaches or suggests a portion of the steering wheel that blocks inflation fluid from venting through a vent opening when an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is in an inflated position, a combination of the references also fails to teach or suggest this feature. Therefore, allowance of claim 8 is respectfully requested.

Moreover, there is no suggestion or motivation in Fukuda, Yoshida, or to one having ordinary skill in the art to combine the reference teachings of Fukuda and Yoshida. The purpose of the vent holes 38a and 38b in Fukuda is to release inflation fluid pressure after the air bag is completely inflated and after the occupant impacts the air bag. The purpose of Yoshida is to vent inflation fluid when inflation of the air bag is obstructed and, to prevent the venting of inflation fluid after the air bag becomes completely inflated. There is no suggestion or motivation for modifying the air bag of Fukuda with the teachings of Yoshida as such a modification would be contrary to the intended purpose of Fukuda, i.e., release inflation fluid pressure after the air bag is completely inflated and after the occupant impacts the air bag. Since there is no suggestion or motivation for combining

the reference teachings of Fukuda and Yoshida, allowance of claim 8 is respectfully requested.

New claim 13 recites material for covering at least one vent in an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device. A rupturable member secures the material to the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device. The at least one vent is positioned against a vehicle surface while the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is in an inflated position to help block inflation fluid from venting through the at least one vent. The at least one vent is spaced away from the vehicle surface when the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is obstructed from deploying to the inflated position. The rupturable member ruptures when the at least one vent is spaced away from the vehicle surface to enable inflation fluid to exit the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device through the at least one vent.

New claim 13 patentably defines over Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer, DE 101 46 493, whether taken singularly or in combination. None of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests a rupturable member that ruptures when the at least one vent is spaced away from the vehicle surface to enable inflation fluid to exit the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device through the at least one vent. Since none of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests the rupturable member of claim 13, allowance of claim 13 is respectfully requested.

Claims 14-18 depend from claim 13 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 13. Additionally, claim

14-18 are allowable for the specific limitations of each claim.

Specifically, claim 14 recites that the rupturable member is a tear seam that is ruptured by pressure of inflation fluid within the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device. None of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests that the rupturable member is a tear seam. Therefore, allowance of claim 14 is respectfully requested.

Claim 15 recites that the rupturable member is stitching that secures the material over the at least one vent. Claim 15 also recites that pressure of inflation fluid within the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device ruptures the stitching. None of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests the features of claim 15. Therefore, allowance of claim 15 is respectfully requested.

Claim 17 recites that the material for covering the at least one vent is formed by a portion of the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device. None of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests the features of claim 17. Therefore, allowance of claim 17 is respectfully requested.

Claim 18 recites that the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is folded into a pleat. Claim 18 also recites that a portion of the pleat is the material for covering the at least one vent. None of Yoshida, Fukuda, and Fischer teaches or suggests the features of claim 18. Therefore, allowance of claim 18 is respectfully requested.

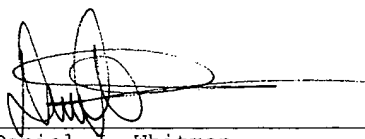
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above-identified patent application is in condition

for allowance, and allowance of the above-identified patent application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account

No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Daniel J. Whitman', is written over a horizontal line.

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